

Stump	Towns	Watt (NC)
Tanner	Udall (CO)	Waxman
Tauscher	Udall (NM)	Weiner
Thompson (CA)	Velazquez	Wexler
Thompson (MS)	Vento	Woolsey
Thurman	Walden	Wu
Tierney	Waters	

NOT VOTING—6

Delahunt	Kennedy	Rush
Hinojosa	Mascara	Scarborough

□ 1519

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

OFFERING CONDOLENCES TO FAMILIES OF VICTIMS AND PEOPLE OF ARMENIA

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, we were appalled to learn earlier today of the assassination of Armenia's Prime Minister Sarkisian and several other high officials in the Armenian Government. It is tragic that this form of political violence has intruded upon the democratic path to which the Armenian people have committed themselves.

It is our hope and prayer that the people of Armenia not allow this kind of despicable terrorism to deter them from pursuing their democratic ideals and the institutions that provide for a free society.

Armenia has been a good friend of our Nation, and America stands ready to continue to provide the assistance needed to our friends to help them overcome this tragedy. It is our profoundest hope that Armenia will speedily recover from this violence and resume the practices that have provided its people the full measure of political freedom and opportunity.

I want to offer our condolences on behalf of the Congress to the families of the victims and to the people of Armenia.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

TRAGIC EVENTS IN ARMENIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I rise today to indicate to my colleagues and the American people the tragic events that have taken place in the Republic of Armenia.

News reports indicate that Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian has been assassinated in an attack by four gunmen who stormed into Parliament during a session earlier today. Other lawmakers and government officials were killed in the attack in the Parliament chamber, including the Speaker of Parliament Karen Demirchian, according to news reports. The death of the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament have now been confirmed by the office of Armenia's president.

The gunmen are currently holding some 100 hostages, including members of Parliament. However, the government is in full control of the situation outside Parliament in the Armenian capital of Yerevan and throughout the country. There is no state of emergency. There are no indications that this was part of any organized coup, but merely the action of a few gunmen whose motives are not yet clear.

The Prime Minister and members of the government were gathered in Parliament for a presentation of the budget. So, clearly, the gunmen chose an occasion when they could attack many of the top leaders at one time. The gunmen have reportedly released the women hostages.

Armenia's President Robert Kocharian was not at the Parliament complex at the time of the shooting. He is there now personally directing the security forces and trying to negotiate for the release of the remaining hostages.

I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that democracy in Armenia is strong. The commitment on the part of Armenia's elected leaders and the vast majority of Armenia people to democracy, to the orderly transfer of power, to peace and stability in Armenia and within the region, all remain as strong as ever.

Clearly, Armenia must be in a state of shock right now. The same is true for me, Mr. Speaker, and for all the friends of Armenia in this Congress on both sides of the aisle and for all the American friends of Armenia, including more than one million Americans of Armenian descent. But Armenia will continue to move forward with the political and economical reforms it began when it won its independence more than 8 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, there is a special poignancy for me and many of my colleagues in learning of the death of Prime Minister Sarkisian. The Prime Minister was our guest in this very Capitol building just a few weeks ago, 4 weeks ago to be exact. More than 30 Members of Congress and many of our staff had the opportunity to hear the Prime Minister give a very strong speech in which he stressed his commitment to continuing with economic reforms while working for a settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict and greater integration between Armenia and her neighbors.

Vazgen Sarkisian had only been Prime Minister since May of this year following nationwide elections for the National Assembly, the Parliament. His party was the Unity Federation. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, he served as Defense Minister from 1995 to 1999. And like many political figures in Armenia, his real involvement in politics began in 1988, as the Soviet Union was collapsing. That year he joined the National Liberation Movement for Independence of Armenia and Constitutional Self-Determination of Nagorno Karabagh.

Also, like many of the political leaders of today's Armenia, Prime Minister Sarkisian was quite young. He was only 40 years old and had an extremely bright future ahead of him as leader of his country.

Mr. Sarkisian was committed to the goal of reform, rebuilding the nation after decades of Soviet domination. He supported integration of Armenia's economy with the region and the world. He sought to promote a society that protects private property with a stable currency and a balanced budget, while providing social protections to its citizens.

During his visit to Washington, the Prime Minister met with Vice President GORE, attended World Bank and IMF meetings, and met with officials of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, as well as other Members of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, Speaker Demirchian had been the leader of Armenia during Soviet times. In the post-Soviet Armenia, he has emerged as a champion of reform. I have had the opportunity to meet Mr. Demirchian during a congressional delegation to Armenia that I participated in this summer with four of my colleagues. We were all struck by the fact that the new leadership, with President Kocharian, Prime Minister Sarkisian, and Speaker Demirchian represented an extremely strong leadership team poised to lead Armenia into a new millennium and into an economic area of prosperity and peace.

While I am sure President Kocharian will continue at that legacy, he has lost two valuable partners. Armenia and the world have lost two fine leaders. But even on this saddest of days, and it really is a very sad day, I am confident that Armenia will continue its progress in establishing a strong, prosperous, and free society.

SOCIAL SECURITY TRUST FUND

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I come to the well of the House today with what I consider good news but also maybe some bad news, a little bit sweet and a little bit sour.